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What Can Be Done About Domestic Employment?

By GRACE TOWNS HAMILTON
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Effects of The War

The past few years have been a time of crisis for both the employer of domestic help and for the household worker. The crisis has created "tensions," which like the early symptoms of a nervous breakdown, may have the advantage, if thoughtfully regarded, of preventing disaster—or the disadvantage, if ignored, of accumulating until a real breakdown becomes inevitable. The "Eleanor Club," the "Push'em Club," the "wait-till-the-war-is-over-we'll-fix-em" reports are symptoms of an unhealthy condition about which something needs to be done and about which something can be done, if the patients, in this case the household workers, the employers, and the community, are willing.

Mamie the maid who became Minnie the welder says that the shorter hours and the better wages pulled her out of the home and into the factory. However, she and her sister workers have recently become acquainted with and accustomed to social security, health insurance, and protective legislation. Their first experience as union members in the war jobs to which they have gone has made concrete for them the advantages which come from cooperative efforts of employees to bargain for improvement in conditions of work. The same experience has also made increasingly clear the necessity for cooperative planning by employees and employers in order that the interests of both may be protected.

Meanwhile, the war period has stimulated the development of cooperative projects among housewives for the care of children and for cleaning services. These efforts have had the tendency to point out to them the importance of organization in the routine of housework. Increased appreciation of each other's needs by the maid and the mistress make possible mutually satisfactory adjustments.

Basic Needs

Finding the answer to what can be done about household employment is important planning for the home front which need not wait for the post-war period. Five needs constitute a basis for efforts to solve the problem:

1. The need for trained household workers, which can be met only by the establishment and support of proper training facilities.

2. The need to make conditions of employment in household work more comparable with other types of work.

3. The need to remove the social stigma so that the difficulties for the group already engaged in the occupation will be corrected, and so that capable women will be attracted to it.

4. The need to develop new standards and techniques of placement, which will provide the employer with the kind and amount of service for which she is willing and able to pay, and which will protect the employee from substandard assignments which destroy the advantages to the employer and the employee of any program for improvement.

5. The need for education of the public in order to make clear to housewives that it is to their personal advantage to raise the status of this almost feudal vocation of domestic service to the level of modern industry.

Education of the community at large can make clear that more adequate wages paid to one of the largest occupational groups in our country will be of vital importance in increasing the purchasing power of a large number of workers, thus making effective an increased demand for goods. Wage adjustment in this occupation is an infrequently mentioned but nevertheless important factor in conquering the threat of a post-war depression by making possible full employment after the war.

Community Approach

Community understanding is essential if resources for proper training and placement are to be made available, and if the hours and wages for the occupation are to be adjusted in the direction of acceptable standards.

Since the amount which can be spent for service is determined by the family budget, many women with a need for help, but with a limited amount to spend, have used their limited funds to buy inferior services at substandard wages. Organized efforts on the part of the community as a whole will provide new resources for the families with limited financial resources and will help such women learn how to spend wisely the amounts they have, to buy the services they need most, without undermining standards. It should be recog-

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DIFFERENTIAL FREIGHT RATES AND THE SOUTH

Seven years ago this summer the National Emergency Council submitted to the President of the United States its now widely publicized "Report on Economic Conditions of the South." Among the findings of this report was this statement: "In addition to absentee ownership and the high cost of credit, the major problem which faces almost all industry in the South is that of freight rate differentials."

The report maintained that the then existing interterritorial railroad freight rates, which affect the movement of many southern manufactured and semimanufactured goods and some agricultural products, actually restricted the development of industry in the South. In view of the subsequent findings of the National Resources Planning Board and the more recent activity of the Southern Governors' Conference, this problem has assumed a unique significance in the social and industrial life of the South. Because the full and mature development of the economic South is one of the SRC's interests, the editors present a brief primer of the problem as it affects the South and its people.

Development of Rate Structure

When the railroads were developing in the country there grew up a regionalized class rate structure which was supposed to have been based upon differentials in the cost of railroad operation, the longer hauls and smaller populations in some areas. These factors necessitated higher rates to meet operating costs. The Southern Territory comprised Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee. The area adjoining the South, known as Official Territory, has the lowest freight rates on manufactured goods and the nation's largest consumer market. The Southern Territory has high rates on manufactured goods and low rates on raw or semimanufactured materials. According to some authorities this means that the region's industries are kept in a semimanufacturing or "colonial" status. In the southeast a manufacturer faces a 39% disadvantage in the charges he has to pay in order to get his goods into Official Territory, which embraces roughly the northern half of the United States east of the Mississippi. A manufacturer in the southeast has a relative disadvantage of 75%, and is even worse off.

Effects of The Differentials

With what results? Simply this: the
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To attain through research and action programs
the ideals and practices of equal opportunity
for all peoples in the region.

Editorial Comment

We salute the Democratic county chairmen in Texas who followed the U. S. Supreme Court decision and permitted Negroes to take part in the Democratic primary on July 22. In Bexar County, for example, the Democratic chairman declared, "I understand many Texas counties are planning to refuse Negroes the right to vote. They are just getting themselves involved in a lot of difficult situations. I am not going to take any chances here." A candidate for office said, "Anybody with a poll tax should be allowed to vote, regardless of their color." In Palo Pinto County, the Democratic chairman stated, "In accordance with the recent decision of the U. S. Supreme Court, county election judges should permit free exercise of the ballot by everyone who professes allegiance to the primary's nominees and who meets state requirements." In these and many other counties, Negroes took part in the Democratic primary for the first time in many years.

* * * *

Two important films have been released recently, but there are indications that they will not be seen in many Southern communities unless interested citizens urge theater managers to show them. One of the films is "The Negro Soldier," which was produced under government supervision and which has been the object of wide comment and praise. The other is March of Time's "Americans All" which is based on the theme of racial and religious tolerance. The SRC assisted the March of Time crew in various ways during its three weeks' stay in Atlanta, and the film contains some scenes portraying the activities of the SRC. However, we have not yet been able to get even a sneak preview of "Americans All."

Attorneys general of 13 states will meet in Memphis, September 5, at a regional convention of the National Association of Attorneys General. Principal topics at the meeting will be the recent opinions of the U. S. Supreme Court affecting Negro voting in Southern primaries and declaring insurance to be an interstate business.

Quotes From The Press

Governor Sparks' Challenge

(Birmingham News, August 2, 1944)

"There is one problem in Alabama and in many Southern states which has been a millstone around our neck . . . That is the tenant problem. More than half our farmers live on tenant farms . . . There has been an increase in white tenancy in recent years, while at the same time there has been a decrease in colored tenancy. This indicates that the Negro race is moving to centers of industry, while on the farm our white people remain in status quo."

The foregoing is from a speech delivered by Governor Sparks before the Southern Farm Bureau Training School meeting at Auburn. It is a reminder from a man whose opinion must be respected that the tenant farmer problem is already largely a white man's problem. Any who have been sniffish about finding a solution for the problem because of a disinclination to help Negroes will have to revise this attitude. And those who have a narrow, self-centered point of view are also under pressure to realize that they have been at odds with their own interest.

Governor Sparks is not content with viewing with alarm. He wants to do something. He knows that the tenant farmer cannot be relied on to use modern agricultural methods so long as he is the victim of a harsh system. The governor doesn't like "regimentation" or "collectivism," but he knows that the tenant farmer must be helped by the state. He is even prepared to supplement what the national government is doing by having the Legislature enact legal relief so that a "better relationship can be developed and a more profitable tenant system can be established looking ultimately toward the elimination of tenancy as we now know it."

These are good words, and one hopes that they left the right impression on the audience the governor addressed. The Farm Bureau's antagonism toward the FSA, which is now mainly concerned with its tenancy program, shows that somewhere along the line there are people who do not join Governor Sparks in his social approach to the subject. Perhaps these are

leaders who frequently misrepresent the sentiment of their followers. It would be a grand thing if the Farm Bureau could throw itself behind the reforms which Governor Sparks suggested. There is good reason to believe that too much of the law affecting the farm tenant is heavily weighted against him.

Housing For Negroes

(Atlanta Journal, July 31, 1944)

The declaration by the National Association of Real Estate Boards, representing 20,000 real estate firms over the nation, that the members should face the Negro housing problem as a sound business investment, is a move that should have far-reaching economic effects. It should result in housing improvements for millions of Negro families, and a raise in the standard of living for this large minority group is certain to have a generally favorable effect upon the nation as a whole.

The association has recognized that there is a serious shortage of healthful and safe housing for Negroes, setting forth the belief that in this shortage lies an unparalleled opportunity for real estate men in every community to tap an almost entirely new field of business. The association asserts further that the Negro, if given the opportunity, is a good economic risk. This makes the projected housing program a sound business policy, in addition to all the other obvious benefits.

Can Easily Be Arranged

(Charleston News-Courier, Aug. 3, 1944)

Negro Rooseveltians talk of Negroes being a majority in three congressional districts of South Carolina, as if the general assembly could not pass an act abolishing three districts and providing for the election of three representatives (or six) at large. It would be excellent were three of the representatives chosen at large though there were no Negro voters in the state. In the same way, legislation can at any time be enacted that would insure the election of white officers in counties. Nothing prevents the joining in an election district of half a dozen counties for the election of sheriffs and legislators, the district to be so arranged that it would contain a majority of white people.

YOU SHOULD READ:

- The Southern Regional Council—Its Origin and Purpose. SRC Pamphlet No. 1. 10c a copy, \$1.00 a dozen, \$7.50 a hundred.
- America's Tenth Man. Revised June, 1944. SRC Pamphlet No. 2. 10c a copy, \$1.00 a dozen, \$7.50 a hundred.
- Southern Offensive. A Reply to J. Saunders Redding and Lillian Smith. By Guy B. Johnson. Reprinted from COMMON GROUND, Summer, 1944. Single copies free on request.
- The Challenge of Race. Addresses by Robert Redfield and Channing H. Tobias. Foreign Missions Conference of North America, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York 10, New York. The SRC has a limited number available for the asking.
- The Negro in America. By Maxwell S. Stewart. This pamphlet, published by the Public Affairs Committee, 30 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, New York, is a summary of An American Dilemma by Gunnar Myrdal. Ready about September 1. The SRC is purchasing a quantity of this pamphlet, and can supply it at 10c a copy, \$1.00 a dozen, \$7.50 a hundred.
- I Never Knewed. By Margaret L. Fisher. Reprinted from THE SOUTHERN FRONTIER, July, 1944. Free on request.

The Progressive Democratic Party In South Carolina

By JOHN H. MCCRAY*

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Up to the time the Supreme Court handed down its decision in the Texas Primary case, Negroes in South Carolina were hopeful that the state's Democratic leaders would recede from their hostile attitude towards Negro membership in the Democratic Party, and their hopes soared when it was announced that a special session of the state legislature had been ordered to deal with the Texas decision.

These hopes lived only briefly, for the special session was told by Governor Olin D. Johnston that it had been assembled for the purpose of circumventing the Texas decision and "maintaining white supremacy."

For some time before, Negroes had been conscious of the fact that they outnumbered whites in 22 of the state's 46 counties and in three of the six congressional districts. Despite pleas for their admission into the state's Democratic Party, made by both Negro leaders and liberal white citizens, their net gain was a suggestion that they form their own Democratic Party. With reluctance the suggestion was studied, and during the process it was discovered that here was a procedure which could work as a boomerang on both the state party and the national Democratic Party, which certainly had known of what was happening to Negroes in the South but which either preferred to let the situation remain or had never been asked for a ruling.

So when all hopes of honorable solutions failed and when it was obvious that legal action planned two years earlier could not be brought in time to have effect in this year's important elections, the Progressive Democratic Party was organized in Columbia, May 24, for the purpose of forcing the issue of Negro admission into the Democratic Party by pressure from the national party and by a threat from the Negro voters in the counties and districts where they outnumbered whites.

The movement spread like wild fire. Daily newspapers and radio commentators discussed it. When the first state convention assembled, 172 delegates from 39 counties were present. Because the state government rejected a plea for use of the House of Representatives chamber, the convention was held in Columbia's Masonic Temple. The convention declared itself open to persons of all races, declared in favor of the re-election of President Roosevelt, adopted a constitution, and named eighteen full-vote delegates to go to the national Democratic convention in Chicago to contest the seating of "lily-whites" as a means of being recognized by the national party.

The party launched a state-wide registration drive for voting in bloc in the general election this year, proposing a full party ticket offering opposition to every nominee from the white party. The white members of the other party became alarmed and, for the first time in the his-

tory of the state, began registration *en masse* to "outvote the Negro." Progressive Democratic workers reported from over the state that any number of devices were being used to deter Negro registration, especially in those counties where Negroes outnumbered whites.

South Carolina law provides registration for any citizen who has lived in the state two years and in the county one, who owns and has paid all taxes on property worth \$300 or more. The alternative is to be able to read and write any section of the state constitution the registration officer might submit.

The devices ranged from keeping Negro registrants in line all day (as was done in Chesterfield County) to brusque refusal to register them. In Williamsburg County, the officer took all day to examine five Negroes, requiring them to read the entire constitution, to write it in full and then interpret it. After surviving these ordeals, the applicants were then asked to relate how courts are conducted and finally were told that a board of eight would have to decide whether or not they were competent to hold a registration certificate.

In Colleton County Negro applicants were told they would have to write a letter to the registration board and obtain permission before they could register. In another county, when a colored man spent most of the day trying to pay his poll tax (necessary for voting), a sheriff's deputy bellowed at him: "What you niggers so anxious about paying poll taxes for? Somebody fixing to get his damn head beat open trying to act like white folks." When the man expressed a willingness to have his head beat anyway, the sheriff accepted his tax, running it up a bit.

In Marlboro County, officials gave Negro applicants cards intended for absentee balloting by soldiers. Many left with these thinking that they held certificates. And so does it continue. Party leaders propose to vote as many this fall as possible but predict it will take several years before full strength is built up.

Before the national Democratic convention, national party leaders became aware of the serious threat posed by the Progressive Democrats. These hitherto unheard-of South Carolinians could alienate the northern Negro vote and toss the fall election into the laps of the Republicans. So at the request of national leaders a series of conferences was held in Washington. Certain definite benefits have come out of these in behalf of Negro Democratic membership in South Carolina, augmented by others gained in Chicago. The delegates were not seated at the convention, mainly because, realizing they were a bit short after having less than three months for complete

state organization, they preferred to threaten and bargain for benefits. They won far more than a knockdown-dragout convention scene would have netted them and returned to South Carolina with the feeling that South Carolina has sent her last all-white delegation to the national convention.

Support of the party has been pledged by a number of white citizens. In fact, the first contribution it received came from a widowed white lady in Columbia.

In South Carolina proper, two main achievements have been claimed by the Progressive Democrats. First, this year's senatorial campaign for the Democratic nomination was conducted without the usual anti-Negro blare. In fact, one candidate ran on a flat record of "fair treatment for the Negro." The second is that party leaders among the old group confess alarmingly that "no longer can we keep the Negro out of politics by the Primary." The general election now is the battle ground.

The Progressive Democratic Party expects to remain a permanent organization, even though South Carolina's pattern falls before the U. S. Supreme Court. Future plans include a state-wide organization among Negroes so long as it shall be necessary to have group action in the matter of group rights and privileges.

A Letter From California

Some time ago we received a letter from a young man in California requesting some of our literature. His letter also contained the following comments:

"I am a Negro student and am working in one of the local shipyards. Very frequently at lunch time I have talked to the men on the personal benefits when one is free of racial bigotry, etc., and what a better job we can do when each is doing his best in cooperating.

"I know I would be a better citizen if it were not for racial discrimination. I also know my white co-worker could rise to a more enjoyable and full life if he would only wake up.

"I am a member of The Neighborhood Church which is interracial in its organization. It has a Negro and a white pastor who alternate.

"The Church has been operating since last November and shows signs of becoming a great agency for good."

JAMES P. JONES.

Elsewhere on this page we publish an article by John H. McCray, Chairman of the recently organized Progressive Democratic Party in South Carolina. The author presents what seems to be a potentially effective strategy for organizing the Negro vote and making it count. The editors invite readers of the SOUTHERN FRONTIER to contribute constructive discussions of this approach.

Domestic Employment

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nized that in this field, as in most others, the employer seldom gets more than she is willing to pay for.

As in any other maladjusted social situation for which a community-wide solution is sought, genuinely representative groups of the people most concerned must consider together programs for improvement. Local groups must take responsibility for local situations. Facts must be found, and a plan of action based upon the facts must be determined.

The American Association of University Women, the National Y. W. C. A., and the National Committee on Household Employment have pioneered in work upon this problem. In the last two years two strong unions of household workers have been chartered. It is evident from reports of all efforts to improve the situation that consideration of standards is essential.

In order to get facts and to consider acceptable standards, household workers and their employers must find channels to work together cooperatively for their mutual interest. In the Southern region, where the members of these two groups recognize their interdependence and are accustomed to everyday relationships, there should be great possibilities for getting together to "do something" in the interest of each other.

Proposed Standards

As a basis for knowing what domestic employees expect, the following statement of standards, approved by a widely represented group of workers, is interesting:

We believe that housework is a dignified occupation. The relationship of the employer and employee is entered into for the mutual economic advantage of both, the employee offering her skill in return for wages, the employer offering wages in return for skill. Social relationships, which result from face to face contacts, should not hide this fundamental economic relationship in which bargaining is taking place.

The relationship should be at all times professional, neither party asking favors nor exploiting the other. The independent relationship will be aided if the employee lives out and has a home life of her own. If she wishes to do this, her wish should be respected and given consideration. Whether the employee lives in or out, her private life should be free from supervision by the employer.

A. Working agreement

A definite written agreement between employer and employee should be made at the time of employment. It may be signed or unsigned and should be subject to periodic review to meet changing conditions.

B. Regular duties

Regular duties shall be clearly defined, based on an analysis of the job to be done within the hour limit agreed upon. A high standard of work shall be expected in return for good wages and satisfactory working conditions.

C. Trial period

After the first interview, the work should begin with a trial period of two weeks, after which time either the employer or employee should feel free to end the relationship if it has proved unsatisfactory.

D. Hours

Actual working hours shall be defined as hours of duty during which the worker is not free to follow her own pursuits.

Freight Rates

(Continued from Page 1)

southern producer attempting to build up a larger business on the principles of decreasing unit costs of production finds his goods barred from a wider market in an area where live 51% of the nation's people.

With what results? According to the National Resources Planning Board, the situation freezes the Southern economy in a form which drains raw materials and partly finished products to the northeast, makes the South pay two-way freight on its purchased manufactured goods, and stunts the development of manufacturing within the South. Thus it becomes cheaper to ship the South's zinc ore to the North, have it made into metallic zinc (used to coat northern steel), and shipped back to the South where it will be used for roofs and galvanized iron ware, than it is to convert this zinc ore in the South without the economic loss of cross hauling. So great is this differential that it counteracts the natural Southern advantages of superior power and fuel supply.

What Can Be Done About It?

What can be done about it? The proffered solutions are many. Some authorities say that no conceivable freight rate structure can be free of discrimination. Although this type of discrimination against localities has been unlawful since 1887, the Transportation Act of 1940 recognized its existence and directed the Interstate Commerce Commission to study the elements of the question. Further legislative treatment is not deemed advisable because of the complex issues involved. It is believed that the Interstate Commerce Com-

Total working hours shall not exceed 60 hours within the week. A schedule of 48 hours is recommended.

Time on call is that time when the worker is not free to leave house, but may rest or follow her own pursuits, being available for emergencies. Two hours on call shall be equivalent to one hour of working time. Overtime may be adjusted by extra time off or extra payment on rate per hour basis. Frequent overtime should be avoided.

Time off shall include one full day (Sunday, if the employee so wishes) and one half day. At least one other evening shall be free.

E. Vacations and holidays

After one year of service the employee should have two weeks' vacation with pay. The employee should be given four of the following holidays: Easter, Decoration Day, Memorial Day, Fourth of July, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's, Labor Day, Mother's Day.

F. Termination of services

Notice of one week or one week's pay shall be given on termination of service by either party.

G. Living conditions

Comfortable living conditions include: 1) adequate food, 2) private room, or one shared by another employee if necessary, 3) access to bath, 4) adequate heat and light, 5) a place to entertain friends.

H. Health examination

An employee should possess a certificate showing that she has had a health examination within a year. The employee shall pay

Notes

According to a survey conducted by CRISIS, magazine of the NAACP, and published in its issue of August, 1944, a total of 4,059 Negro students graduated from colleges and universities during the school year 1943-1944. Of this number, 3,595 received Bachelor degrees, 143 the Master's degree, 9 the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, and 215 professional degrees. Of those who received the Bachelor's degree, 3,510 finished Negro institutions and 85 were graduated from mixed schools. Howard University at Washington, D. C., continues to have the largest enrollment, 2,355; Prairie View in Texas is second with 1,353; and Tennessee State College is third with 1,256.

* * * *

During the week of August 14, a Scout Leaders' School was held at Gammon Theological Seminary, Atlanta, under the auspices of Region Six, Boy Scouts of America. The purpose of the School was to train for more effective leadership of boyhood through the program of the Boy Scouts of America, with particular emphasis upon the problems of Scouting for Negro boys in the Southeast. Volunteer Scouters and Scouting Executives from several states attended the School. In 1943 a similar school was held with 122 men participating.

mission can effect a fair solution working in cooperation with interested groups. However, the acuteness of the problem will be alleviated with the increased development of competitive agencies of transport. Meanwhile, as reported in the last issue of the FRONTIER, a court test case is in the offing.

for the examination, except that when she remains for more than six months, the employer shall reimburse her for half the cost of the examination.

I. Wages

For living-in employees, minimum wages for the inexperienced should be \$12 a week, for experienced \$15.

For employees living out, minimum wages for the inexperienced should be 25c an hour; for the experienced according to the following schedule: 50c an hour for 3 hours or less, 40c an hour from 3 to 30 hours a week, 30c an hour for more than 30 hours a week.

The rates should be revised as costs of living change. They may be varied in accordance with conditions in different types of communities.

Two significant statements deserve the thoughtful consideration of those who decide that something must and can be done about the problem of domestic help:

From the inescapable fact that domestic employment is a human relationship and not a totally economic one arise most of the problems connected with it. From an acceptance of that fact arise certain possibilities of understanding and improving the relations.

Only one-half of the labor problem can be solved by wage and hour adjustment, the remainder lies in human relationships and the needs of the human soul. No addition to wages or subtraction from hours will bring peace until the men and women concerned receive their due as human beings.